

Status of Hunting Land Access in Kentucky

Report Required by KRS 150.0241(6): No Net Loss of Hunting Land



Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources

September 30, 2022

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources' mission is to conserve, protect and enhance Kentucky's fish and wildlife resources and provide outstanding opportunities for hunting, fishing, trapping, boating, shooting sports, wildlife viewing, and related activities.

Background

In the 2010 Regular Legislative Session, the Kentucky General Assembly passed Senate Bill 64, which among other things, established a state policy of requiring "No Net Loss" for hunting land access in the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources (KDFWR) was an early supporter of the No Net Loss policy in the 2010 General Assembly and included it with its official agency-legislation proposals. Kentucky's passage of Senate Bill 64 in 2010 made us the ninth state to establish such a policy. Currently, thirteen No Net Loss states include Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia (<https://www.nra.org/gun-laws/>).

The concept of No Net Loss has consistently been a focal point of hunters and sportsman across the country and has also been considered a key legislative agenda item for the National Rifle Association (NRA). In short, the No Net Loss policy requires that states maintain at least the same level of available public hunting land that currently exists. The end result is to assure hunters that the opportunities they now have will not be eliminated.

In Senate Bill 64, the Kentucky Legislature saw fit to include various reporting requirements to maintain a constant focus on hunting land access in the Commonwealth. For example, any state agency that owns or manages lands shall submit a written report by October 1 of each year to the Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Commission, the Legislative Research Commission, and the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment describing the following:

1. A list of properties that were open for hunting during the previous fiscal year;
2. A list of properties that were not open for hunting during the previous fiscal year; and
3. The acreage for each property and the county where each property is located.

Additionally, KDFWR specifically is required by October 1 of each year to submit to the Legislative Research Commission and the Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Environment a written report describing:

1. The acreage managed by the commission that was closed to hunting during the previous fiscal year and the reasons for the closures; and
2. The acreage managed by the commission that was opened to hunting to compensate for closures of existing land pursuant to subsection (4) of this section.

Operationally, Section 4 of Senate Bill 64 that became law on July 10, 2010 requires that any land-management decisions “shall not result in any net loss of habitat land acreage available for hunting opportunities on commission-managed lands that exists on the effective date of this Act.” This was eventually codified as KRS 150.0241. The department is glad to have this opportunity to offer this report of the available hunting lands in Kentucky as of September 30, 2021. Some baseline acreages may be adjusted from last year’s report as a result of minor cartographic, boundary clean-up. In these instances, the actual acreage available for hunting opportunities was unchanged.

Table 1. Total of Wildlife Management Areas owned or co-owned by the KDFWR

Name of Area	County	2021 Acres	2022 Acres
Ballard WMA	Ballard	8,014	8,014
Beechy Creek WMA	Calloway	119	119
Big Rivers WMA and State Forest ¹	Crittenden, Union	7,574	7,574
Boatwright WMA ²	Ballard	6,790	6,782
Buck Creek WMA	Pulaski	850	850
Burchell-Beech Creek WMA	Clay	1,241	1,241
Cedar Creek Lake WMA	Lincoln	796	796
Clay WMA	Bath, Fleming, Nicholas	8,979	8,979
Clear Creek WMA	Hopkins	858	858
Coil Estate WMA	Ballard, Carlisle	795	795
Cranks Creek WMA	Harlan	2,155	2,155
Curtis Gates Lloyd WMA	Grant	1,105	1,105
Dennis-Gray WMA	Adair	102	102
Dix River WMA	Lincoln	401	401
Doug Travis WMA	Carlisle, Hickman	4,132	4,132
Dr. James R. Rich WMA	Owen	2,264	2,264
Dr. Norman and Martha Adair WMA	Boone	635	635
Ed Mabry - Laurel Gorge WMA	Elliott	1,439	1,486
Fleming WMA	Fleming	1,907	1,907
Griffith Woods WMA	Harrison	746	746

Harris-Dickerson WMA	Hopkins, Muhlenberg	0	1,837
Hensley-Pine Mountain WMA	Harlan, Letcher	4,848	4,848
Higginson-Henry WMA	Union	5,446	5,446
John A. Kleber WMA	Franklin, Owen	4,245	4,245
John C. Williams WMA ²	Nelson	730	730
Jones-Keeney WMA	Caldwell	2,055	2,055
Kaler Bottoms WMA	Graves	1,904	1,904
Kentucky Ridge Forest WMA ¹	Bell	3,505	3,505
Kentucky River WMA	Henry, Owen	3,643	3,643
Knobs State Forest and WMA ¹	Bullitt	1,537	1,537
L. B. Davison WMA	Ohio	137	137
Lee K. Nelson WMA	Webster	60	60
Marion County WMA and State Forest ^{1,2}	Marion	1,341	1,341
Marrowbone State Forest and WMA ¹	Cumberland, Metcalfe	1,955	1,955
Meadow Creek WMA	Wayne	232	232
Miller Welch-Central Kentucky WMA	Madison	1,847	1,847
Mud Camp Creek WMA	Cumberland	572	572
Mullins WMA	Kenton	259	259
Obion Creek WMA	Carlisle, Fulton, Hickman	4,258	4,258
Old Trace Creek WMA	Lewis	323	769
Peabody WMA ²	Hopkins, Muhlenberg, Ohio	39,246	39,246
Ping-Sinking Valley WMA	Pulaski	806	806
R. F. Tarter WMA	Adair, Russell	1,171	1,171
Rockcastle River WMA	Pulaski	2,924	2,924
Rolling Fork WMA	Nelson, Larue	2,896	2,896
Ross Creek WMA	Lee, Estill	941	935
Shillalah Creek WMA	Bell, Harlan	2,535	2,535
Simon Kenton WMA	Mason	982	982
Sloughs WMA ²	Henderson, Union	6,283	6,283
South Shore WMA	Greenup	98	98
Stephens Creek WMA	Gallatin	398	398
Stone Mountain WMA and State Natural Area ¹	Harlan	1,017	1,017
Sunnybrook WMA	Rowan	0	142
T. N. Sullivan WMA	Franklin	145	145
Tradewater WMA	Christian, Hopkins	727	727
Twin Eagle WMA	Owen	170	170
Veterans Memorial WMA	Scott	2,497	2,497
West Kentucky WMA ²	McCracken	3,190	3,190
Winford WMA	Carlisle	236	236
Yatesville Lake WMA ²	Lawrence	52	52
Yellowbank WMA ^{1,2}	Breckinridge	6,761	6,761

Total	162,870	165,328
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¹ These areas are co-owned with another state or county agency.

² These areas have additional tracts of land that are leased, and those specific acres are listed below in Tables 2 or 3.

³ New areas or tracts added since last report.

Table 2. Wildlife Management Areas with a long-term state or federal lease.

Area Name	County	2021 Acres	2022 Acres
Barren River Lake WMA	Allen, Barren	8,735	8,735
Beaver Creek WMA	McCreary, Pulaski	17,753	17,753
Boatwright WMA	Ballard	2,064	2,064
Buckhorn Lake WMA	Leslie, Perry	3,571	3,571
Cane Creek WMA	Laurel	6,677	6,677
Carr Creek Lake WMA	Knott	2,880	2,880
Dale Hollow Lake WMA	Clinton, Cumberland	5,632	5,632
Dewey Lake WMA	Floyd, Pike	9,172	9,172
Fishtrap Lake WMA	Pike	13,138	13,138
Grayson Lake WMA	Carter, Elliott	8,025	8,025
Green River Lake WMA	Adair, Taylor	21,019	21,019
John C. Williams WMA	Nelson	343	343
Kentucky Lake WMA	Calloway, Marshall	4,044	4,044
Lake Barkley WMA	Lyon, Trigg	907	907
Lake Cumberland WMA	Clinton, McCreary, Pulaski, Russell, Wayne	38,789	38,789
Livingston County WMA and State Natural Area	Livingston	2,430	2,430
Martins Fork Lake WMA	Harlan	764	764
Martins Fork WMA and State Natural Area	Harlan	1,599	1,599
Mill Creek WMA	Jackson	13,009	13,009
Nolin River Lake WMA	Edmonson, Grayson, Hart	6,456	6,456
Ohio River Islands WMA	Livingston	1,264	1,264
Paintsville Lake WMA	Johnson, Morgan	11,220	11,220
Paul Van Booven WMA	Breathitt	2,287	2,287
Pioneer Weapons WMA	Bath, Menifee	7,731	7,731
Redbird WMA	Clay, Leslie	24,014	24,014
Robinson Forest WMA	Breathitt, Knott, Perry	2,003	2,003
Rough River Lake WMA	Breckinridge, Grayson, Hardin	4,180	4,180
Sloughs WMA	Henderson, Union	4,890	4,890
Taylorsville Lake WMA	Anderson, Nelson, Spencer	9,417	9,417
West Kentucky WMA	McCracken	3,235	3,235

Yatesville Lake WMA	Lawrence	13,139	13,139
	Total	250,387	250,387

¹ Adjusted as a result of minor cartographic, boundary clean-up and/or new boundary information from landowner.

² New tracts added.

Table 3. Total of Wildlife Management Areas with a short-term private lease.

Area Name	County	2021 Acres	2022 Acres
Ashland WMA	Lee	2,506	2,506
Boone Forestlands WMA	Bell, Harlan, Leslie	31,668	31,668
C. F. Ataya WMA	Whitley	54,556	54,556
Elk Forest WMA	Bell, Clay, Harlan, Knox, Leslie	16,802	16,802
Fortner-Davis WMA	Bell	1,358	1,358
Peabody WMA	Hopkins, Muhlenberg, Ohio	2,077	2,077
	Total	108,967	108,967

¹ Adjusted as a result of minor cartographic, boundary clean-up and/or new boundary information

² Agreement not renewed

Table 4. Non-Wildlife Management Areas Available for Public Hunting.

Owner	2021 Acres	2022 Acres
Department of Defense	159,248	159,248
Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources	2,221	2,221
Division of Forestry	32,781	32,781
Kentucky Department of Parks	18,659	18,659
Kentucky National Guard	523	523
Lawrence County Fiscal Court	563	563
National Park Service	30,301	30,301
Private	138,814	134,869
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service	11,774	11,774
U.S. Forest Service	747,901	747,901
Total	1,142,786	1,138,840

¹ Otter Creek Outdoor Recreation Area.

² Does not reflect areas added/removed after July 1, 2021.

No Net Loss Baseline for Hunting Access

As depicted above, KDFWR was fortunate to have a gain in areas owned by the agency that are open to public hunting and access. Compared to the 2010 baseline of 1,006,642 acres of hunting lands, KDFWR has added 656,880 acres for a total of 1,663,522 acres of hunting access lands in 2022. In closing, it is important to note that if hunters are not aware of the access opportunities outlined in this report, then the department, our customers (both current and future) and the Commonwealth as a whole will not see the maximum benefit. This is why KDFWR strives to publish guides and other announcements to reflect the hunting opportunities available. The department also makes this and more information available on our website at <http://fw.ky.gov/More/Pages/Wildlife-Management-Areas-and-Public-Hunting-Areas.aspx>. By accessing the department's website, hunters are able to view actual maps of the area, obtain driving directions, download GPS coordinates, and find contact information for area managers.

The Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources recognizes that approximately 94 percent of Kentucky's land and water area is in private ownership. Additionally, state surveys consistently report that "lack of access" is the number one constraint to hunters going afield. Because of these two factors, the department has continued to focus our efforts on providing public access for all sportsmen, but especially hunters in Kentucky. Our department and commission system have long held the belief that every hunter, angler and sportsmen should have a place to go participate in their outdoor activity within thirty minutes of their home. With this continued focus, and with the No Net Loss of Hunting Land requirement in Kentucky, KDFWR hopes to greatly add to the successes in providing public access we've already enjoyed.